

Augusta Regional Transportation Study Newsletter

Issue 19

March 2004

ARTS Transportation Plan Update

YOU'RE INVITED!

ARTS Transportation Plan Public Meetings

The public is invited to participate in the initial planning stages of the Augusta Regional Transportation Study Long Range Plan Update. Three meetings will be held to introduce the study planning process, discuss major transportation issues and concerns, and gather public feedback. All meetings will begin with an open house followed by a formal presentation and question and answer period. Meeting dates, times, and locations:

Columbia County:

- Monday, April 12, in the Evans Government Center Auditorium between 5:30pm and 7:30 pm.

Aiken County:

- Tuesday, April 13, in Aiken Municipal Building between 11:30 am and 1:30 pm.

Richmond County:

- Tuesday, April 13, in the Augusta Civic Center between the hours of 5:30 pm and 7:30 pm.

Alexander Drive Project

Alexander Drive is an important connection between Washington Road and Riverwatch Parkway. The Alexander Drive widening project proposes to correct roadway deficiencies, improve operational efficiency, provide a safer transportation environment for vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians, and serve the transportation demand generated by new construction and development.

The proposed project would widen the existing road to four lanes, with 4 foot bike lanes in each direction, a 20-foot raised median, and turn lanes at median openings. Proposed shoulders include curb and gutter with adequate drainage structures and sidewalks on both sides. Improvements would begin at Alexander Drive's intersection with Washington Road and end at its intersection with Riverwatch Parkway. Vertical alignment improvements will remove a number of small hills which currently have insufficient sight distances. The proposed alignment includes a new structure over Rock Creek and a widened crossing over the railroad tracks. The utility work consists of the installation of new sanitary sewer and water mains along the entire length of the improved road as well as the relocation of an existing telephone substation.

The project is presently in Preliminary Design and Completion phase of the Categorical Exclusion (CE). The CE is expected to be completed in spring 2004; the Preliminary Field Plan Review in late summer 2004; Right-of-Way Plans in early 2005; and construction currently in long range.

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Georgia Interstate System Plan Public Meetings - between

5-7 pm

- March 15 in Flowery Branch
- March 16 in Macon at 4499 Riverside Drive
- March 25 in Valdosta at 4089 Valtech Road

Please call Tom McQueen at 404-657-6697 for more information

Columbia County Long Range Transportation Plan

In 2003, Columbia County and the Georgia Department of Transportation hired TEI of Atlanta to prepare a Long Range Transportation Plan for the county. After several public hearings, the plan is now in draft form.

The plan evaluated deficient road segments using a modified transportation model based on the ARTS model with added traffic analysis zones (TAZs) for the western portion of the county that is not within the urbanized study area. Socioeconomic inputs for all of the TAZs were updated with forecasts by the county's Planning and Development Services Division using 2000 Census figures and projections by Woods and Poole. Population and employment distribution was done in accordance with the future land use policy of the Columbia County Growth Management Plan.

After calibration of the model based on 2000 figures, three (3) testing scenarios were run to gather transportation performance and deficiencies in the short term (2007), intermediate term (2012), and long term (2025). Using criteria based on generally accepted transportation studies, congested segments were classified according to level of service (LOS) for both peak (AM/PM) and daily traffic volumes.

The result of the modeling produced needs for improvements throughout most of the major routes in the county, most notably Interstate 20 and Washington Road (SR 104/47). Other routes include Old Petersburg/Old Evans Road, Lewiston Road/Horizon South Parkway, Columbia Road (SR 232), Wrightsboro Road (SR 223) and others.

As part of policy formulation for suggested improvements, several suggestions to relieve overcrowded conditions were dropped, including the widening of Washington Road and Belair Road from four to six lanes. These projects were prohibitively expensive and not in the best interest of the county in terms of land use implications.

Major projects from the preliminary list of recommended projects include:

1. Widening of I-20 from 4 to 6 lanes from Appling-Harlem exit to Belair Road, 10.76 miles, \$72 million
2. Hereford Farm Road, widen from 2 to 4 lanes, 4.4 miles, \$17 million
3. Gibbs/Cox/Owens Roads, realignment and widen from 2 to 4 lanes, 3.8 miles, \$15 million
4. William Few Parkway Connector, between William Few and Hereford Farm Road, 2.8 miles, \$10 million

Several projects are also scheduled for Washington Road, including many already in the current regional LRTP and TIP. The projects widen this route from 2 to 4 lanes past the Pollard's Corner area and are expected to cost over \$33 million.

Total cost of the preliminary list of improvements total over \$338 million. With such an extensive list of expensive projects, priorities will need to be established concerning available funding and necessity in the implementation of this plan.

Work is also underway on several corridors to determine more specific improvements that can be made, including Hardy McManus Road and other off-route streets. The Corridor Action Plans will become available within the next few months.

For further information, contact Tim Young, Senior Planner, Columbia County Planning and Development Services Division at (706) 312-7178 or at tyoung@co.columbia.ga.us

Augusta Regional Transportation Study **Long Range Transportation Plan Update**

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETINGS

The Augusta-Richmond Planning Commission and the Aiken County Planning & Development Department invite the public to participate in the initial planning stages of the Augusta Regional Transportation Study Long Range Plan Update. Three meetings will be conducted to introduce the study planning process, discuss major transportation issues and concerns, and gather public feedback. All meetings will begin with an open house followed by a formal presentation and question and answer period. Meeting dates, times, and locations are provided below.

Monday, April 12

Evans Government Center Auditorium
630 Ronald Reagan Drive, Building A
Evans, Georgia 30809
Time: 5:30 – 7:30 PM

Tuesday, April 13

Aiken Municipal Building - Conference Center
214 Park Avenue, SW
Aiken, SC 29801
Time: 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM
*Refreshments will be provided

and

Augusta Civic Center
601 7th Street, Meeting Room C
Augusta, GA 30901
Time: 5:30 – 7:30 PM

For additional information or if you require special accommodations, please contact

Columbia Co.:	Tim Young at tyoung@co.columbia.ga.us Phone (706) 312-7178
Aiken Co.:	Stephen Strohminger at ssstrohminger@aikencountysc.gov Phone (803) 642-1520
Augusta:	Paul DeCamp at pdecamp@augustaga.gov Phone (706) 821-1796

Georgia Interstate System Plan

In 2002, Georgia DOT hired consultants to develop a strategic Interstate System Plan. The statewide study is evaluating Georgia's interstate system (outside metro Atlanta) to identify needed improvements and maintain its efficient and safety operation through the year 2035. The project has an anticipated completion date of April 2004.

The study's analysis has resulted in a preliminary program of projects to meet Interstate needs and deficiencies identified in four core areas: safety, congestion, maintenance, and connectivity to major activity centers. The study findings indicate that a significant portion of the needs identified will be addressed by projects already programmed in GDOT's construction work program or in the Long Range Program. Other recommended improvements are by the four core areas mentioned above.

Safety

The study identified 6.3 percent of the rural interstate system and 3 percent of the urban interstate system that had higher than average accident rates. Less than a third of these locations were identified in accident reports as locations with a road defect as a contributing factor. Only three of these locations did not have a specific improvement project already planned.

Congestion

Without any improvements, the study found that by year 2035, 61 percent of the Interstate System will experience moderate congestion, that is a volume/capacity ratio between 0.75 and 0.9. 28 percent of the system will experience heavy congestion, that is volume/capacity ratio over 0.9. the implementation of planned projects will lower moderate congestion levels to 39 percent and heavy congestion levels to 13 percent. The study recommends the following sections of the system for widening or operational improvements by year 2035, in addition to what is currently planned:

- the I-75 corridor between Chattanooga and Northern Atlanta (from 6 to 8 lanes)
- the I-75 corridor between Southern Atlanta and Macon (from 4 to 6 lanes)
- the I-20 and I-520 corridors in metropolitan Augusta (from 4 to 6 lanes)
- Interstates in metropolitan Macon
- The I-16 corridor between I-95 and I-516 in Savannah and on I-516 within Savannah
- The I-185 corridor in metropolitan Columbus.

Bridges

Of the 1,077 Interstate bridges, approximately 484 will need rehabilitation or replacement by 2035 if no improvements are made. Implementing planned projects reduces this number to 269. Implementing study recommendations will reduce this number to zero.

Pavement

Any deficiencies in pavement condition are expected to be corrected under GDOT's routine pavement resurfacing program. The study estimates that the expected increases in truck traffic will add \$171 million over current GDOT estimates of the cost of maintaining the system through 2035.

Connectivity

The Interstate system intersects with key transportation networks, such as the National Highway System, Strategic Highway Network, STAA/Truck, or Governor's Road Improvement Program, at 56 locations across the state. Forty nine of those interchanges were identified as having one or more deficiencies. Implementing planned projects will reduce this number to 32. The planned and recommended improvements will also result in environmental benefits through a reduction in emissions by 0.5 to 3.7 percent.

Reprinted from the Georgia Department of Transportation News Release dated March 2, 2004.

ARTS News and Certification Checklist

- Air Quality – The Georgia Department of Natural Resources submitted a 6-month progress report to the US Environmental Protection Agency on December 31, 2003 regarding the Augusta Early Action Compact. A final draft of the Early Action Plan will be available to the public by March 31, 2004.
- UPWP – The final FY 2005 UPWP was approved by the ARTS Policy Committee on March 4, 2004.

Certification:

The next ARTS Certification will be held in August 2004. staff is working with FHWA officials in gathering information.

- Freight Plan – We hope to bid it out in 2004. We are awaiting the completion of the Georgia Interstate System Plan Study which is due to be completed in April 2004.

Augusta-Richmond County Comprehensive Plan Adopted

On February 17, 2004 the Augusta Commission adopted the Augusta-Richmond County Comprehensive Plan. The new plan updates the comprehensive plan published in 1992, and also incorporates growth management policies from the 1995 Land Use and Public Facilities Plan. The plan features an updated profile of Augusta's population, housing, economy, transportation network, public facilities, natural and historic resources, and land use. An implementation strategy and five-year short-term work program list the projects the city and other stakeholders will carry out to address community needs. For more information, contact Paul DeCamp at the Augusta-Richmond County Planning Commission (821-1796). The plan can be viewed from the Planning Commission homepage at: http://www.augustaga.gov/departments/planning_zoning/default.htm

Construction Update

Median improvements on Deans Bridge Road & the widening of the bridges over Butler Creek: Contractor continues to work on median area along US 1. They are also placing storm drain pipe around Barton Chapel Road and Spring Grove Road. Bridge work is 77 % complete at this time.

SR 56/I-520 Interchange: Contractor is tying rebar steel at both bridge sites for bridge decks, and also working on Ramps and placing temporary barrier wall at several locations.

Gordon Highway – Completed and open to traffic February 27, 2004.

Whiskey Road/ Silver Bluff Road Connector Committee

The Whiskey/ Silver Bluff Road Connector Committee has almost completed their work. The Property Impact Subcommittee reported their findings at the last meeting and presented their scores for each route. All the scores for each of the eight alternatives and for each of the six factors were entered into a spreadsheet at the meeting so that total weighted scores could be calculated. The results of the scoring placed route 2A (starting at the Glenwood/ Silver Bluff intersection and ending near the Talatha Church/ Whiskey Road intersection), route 3A (starting at the Glenwood/ Silver Bluff intersection and ending at the Chime Bell Church/ Whiskey intersection), and route 6 (starting at the Anderson Pond/ Silver Bluff intersection and ending at the Chime Bell Church/ Whiskey intersection) in the top three.

For the next meeting, staff is adding route 3A to the route maps and checking all scoring for accuracy. Additionally, the Committee members will take comments from the public.



Please Do Not Drink and Drive

ARTS CALENDAR

Augusta meetings are usually held on the 8th Floor of the Municipal Building at 530 Greene Street, Augusta, GA. Please call ARCPC (706) 821-1796 to verify time and place.

APRIL 2004

NO MEETINGS

MAY 2004

CAC/TCC: 12TH, 9:30 A.M.
ENDORSE DRAFT TIP

JUNE 2004

POLICY: 3RD, 11:00 A.M.
APPROVE DRAFT TIP

VISIT OUR WEBSITE

The Augusta-Richmond County Planning Commission website includes all ARTS committee agendas and related transportation planning information. The address is:

http://www.augustaga.gov/departments/planning_zoning/

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